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## THE FAST OF TEBETH.

"Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this selfsame day: the king of Babylon drew close unto Jerusalem this selfsame day."—Ezek. xxiv. 2.

(*From the Hebrew of Joseph bar Samuel Tob Elem.  
Date about 1040.*)

Lo! I recall the siege which fell on me:  
Within this month he struck me; he destroyed  
With three blows;—cut me down and left me void;—  
Now he hath made me weary utterly<sup>1</sup>.

He silenced on the eighth day all my throng:  
(Have I not for three things a fast proclaimed?)  
The king bade: write the law in Greek<sup>2</sup>;—they maimed,  
They ploughed on me; they made their furrows long<sup>3</sup>.

Upon the ninth day—wrath, disgrace, and shame!  
Stripped off was my fair robe in honour worn;  
For he who gave sweet words<sup>4</sup> was surely torn:  
Ezra the scribe—yea, he of blessed name<sup>5</sup>.

The tenth day: then the seer was bidden: "Yea,  
Write thee within the book of vision; write  
This for remembrance; now shalt thou indite  
For them despised and crushed—this selfsame day<sup>6</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Job xvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Talmud, *Megillah*, 9 a; and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book XII, chap. ii.                   <sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxix. 3.                   <sup>4</sup> Gen. xl ix. 21.

<sup>5</sup> According to tradition the ninth of Tebeth was the day of Ezra's death.                   <sup>6</sup> Ezek. xxiv. 2.

Counting the months, within the tenth the woe  
And wail he wakened; but the sorrow's smart—  
Its onward way was branded on my heart  
When one came saying: "The city is struck low<sup>1</sup>."

For these things I have scattered o'er me dust:  
Oh that a shaft had pierced mine heart that day!  
—For such woe I would dig my grave;—but nay,  
I wrought rebelliously: the Lord is just<sup>2</sup>.

I call thee, thou who hast repentance nigh  
For mine affliction; lo! my praying heed;  
Hear my beseeching; my salvation speed;  
Hide thee not at my sighing, at my cry<sup>3</sup>.

O moon Tebeth! exceeding is my sum  
Of pain therein: when his face changed for me.  
Yet, though I sinned, his goodness I shall see,  
Who saith: "Ye waves, but so far shall ye come<sup>4</sup>."

NINA DAVIS.

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Lam. i. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Lam. iii. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Job xxxviii. 11.